Nutrition Services

School Meals Initiative (SMI)
Final Report
For
DC Public Schools

441 4th Street NW, Suite 350N
Washington, DC 20001

May 2003

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INTRODUCTION

The School Meals Initiative (SMI) was developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to assist schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) serve lunches and breakfasts that are consistent with the applicable recommendations of the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These guidelines recommend a variety of foods and a diet with 30% or less of calories from fat and less than 10% of calories from saturated fat. In addition, breakfasts must provide at least ¼ of the daily Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) and lunches must provide ⅓ RDA for protein, iron, calcium and vitamins A and C.

Historically, nutrition standards for the school meal programs focused on food adequacy and the prevention of undernourishment. However, current data shows that a large percentage of the student population who qualifies and receives free or reduced lunches through the National School Lunch program are the very children who are considered "at risk" for developing diet related diseases caused by an over consumption of fats, cholesterol and sodium. These diseases include obesity, cancer, heart disease and diabetes. While school children may be over consuming some nutrients, countless studies show that the vast majority of these children are not getting their recommended servings of fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains.

The goal of this SMI review is to move the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) in a direction that places more emphasis on ensuring that school meals meet the standards for providing key nutrients, and less emphasis on providing the food components of traditional and enhanced menu planning options.

Through this SMI review of DCPS, meals were evaluated on their total nutrient composition, rather than by components. The nutrient analysis was conducted based on school production record data.

The nutrient analysis of the lunches and breakfasts served is typically conducted for five consecutive school days. However, because of the more than average number of snow days in February 2003, USDA gave the analysis team permission to choose alternate days for the review. The days we chose were February 3-6, and 10, 2003.

In conducting the SMI review, nutrient analysis was only one source of data we used to determine if DCPS met the nutrition standards. Other considerations included menus, recipes, food product descriptions, food preparation techniques, production records, training programs for staff, nutrition education programs for staff and students, and overall accuracy of records. We not only assessed school meals based on the dietary guidelines, but also determined what corrective actions may be necessary by DCPS to meet the SMI goals.

SCHOOL PROFILE

School Reviewed:	District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
Contact Name/ Title:	Catherine Lynch, Food Service Director
School Address:	3535 V Street NE, Washington, DC 20018
Telephone Number:	202-576-7742
Menu Planner:	Barbara Adams, Dietician
Menu Planning Option:	Enhanced Food Based
Ages/Grades Participating in the SMI Review:	Grades (K-12) River Terrace Elementary Sousa Junior High School Ballou Senior High School
Date of Last SMI Review:	N/A

REVIEWER PROFILE

SMI Reviewer:	University of the District of Columbia, Department of Nutrition and Food Science
Contact Name/ Title:	Dr. Prema Ganganna, Director, Department of Nutrition and Food Science
Reviewer Address:	4200 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008
Telephone Number:	202-274-5516
Period of Analysis:	February 3 - 6, and 10, 2003
Nutrient Analysis Software:	NUTRIKIDS for Windows

MENU ANALYSIS

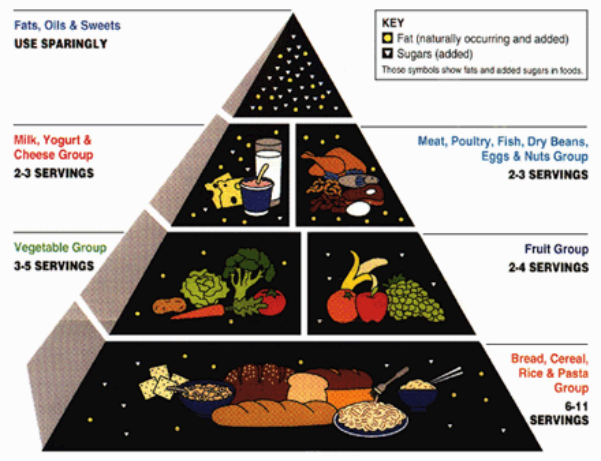
The review of the breakfast and lunch menus for the three schools: River Terrace Elementary, Sousa Junior High and Ballou Senior High indicated that DCPS had adequately planned to meet the food components consistent with the enhanced food-based menu planning guidelines for the USDA National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs.

The planned breakfast menu for each school (See Appendices A, G and M) included a variety of enriched white grain products but limited amounts of whole grain items such as oatmeal. The breakfast menu also included a variety of meat/meat alternatives and a variety of milk choices. Conversely, it did not include a variety of fresh fruits. While DCPS is meeting the required fruit component by serving 100% fruit juice, there is no substitute for the nutrients and fiber found in fresh fruits. The consumption of 100% fruit juice, according to the USDA, is advantageous for healthy children because juices generally contain no added sweeteners and are naturally low in fat and sodium. However, offering fresh fruits on some days instead of 100% fruit juice would not only increase the dietary fiber but also would increase the menu variety.

The planned lunch menu for the elementary school (See Appendix D) listed a variety of highly processed meat/meat alternatives which, upon initial observation, would indicate foods that are high in sodium and fat. The secondary high school lunch menus (See Appendices J and P) listed a variety of meat/meat alternatives with only a few items being high in fat, including fried chicken, hot dogs and half smoke sausages with chili and cheese.

All of the schools' planned lunch menus included a variety of enriched grain products in the form of rolls, pasta and rice as well as a variety of vegetables, fruits and a variety of milk choices. Assorted canned fruit options were listed on all menus, but the review team was concerned that there were not enough fresh fruit options and that food items, such as fruit gelatin, were being used as a substitute for fresh fruit. While the fruit gelatin may satisfy the meal pattern requirement under the traditional menu planning option, it does not contain the same quality of nutrients as a whole fruit product.

Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children 7 & Up



PRODUCTION RECORD ANALYSIS

River Terrace Elementary School

The breakfast and lunch production records for River Terrace Elementary (See Appendices B and E) were complete. The menu food items that were listed on the production records were the exact food items that were described on the planned menus with no exceptions. Because the food served to the elementary students were pre-plated and prepared by an off-site vendor, there were no recipe numbers provided for the menu food items on the production records. The portion sizes of the menu food items were accurately listed as either weight (ounce or gram) or as measurement (cup, tablespoon or teaspoon). The portions were sufficient for the elementary grade group but there was no breakdown of the various types of milk, cereals or juice served.

Sousa Junior High School

The review of breakfast and lunch production records for Sousa Junior High School (See Appendices H and K) revealed some menu food items that were listed on the planned menu were not on the production record. For example, the February 4th breakfast production record did not list scrambled eggs as was listed on the planned menu. The February 3rd lunch production record did not list the tossed salad or the macaroni salad that was listed on the planned menu. The manufacturer's labels for the prepackaged menu food items and the standardized recipes for the self-prepared menu items listed on the production records were not included in the SMI review package. Although the Sousa breakfast and lunch production records were completed, the portion sizes of the prepackaged menu food items were not accurately listed as either weight (ounce or gram) or as measurement (cup, tablespoon or teaspoon). For example, the February 3rd lunch production record listed the portion sizes of the chicken patty and sub roll as "each." The Sousa production records also did not list a breakdown of the various types of milk, cereals or juice served.

Ballou Senior High School

The breakfast and lunch production records for Ballou Senior High School (See Appendices N and Q) did not match the planned menu. The justification DCPS gave for this discrepancy was that the school had problems with the food delivery, therefore the food managers had to prepare what was available. Neither the breakfast nor the lunch production records for Ballou were completed. This was a problem not only because the production records did not match the planned menu but also because the nutrient analysis could only be conducted on the menu items that were completed. Therefore, the nutrient and meal pattern requirements based on our observations are not being met. For example, the February 4th lunch production record was only completed for the following menu food items: hoagie, chicken patty, cheeseburger, bun, one lettuce leaf, two slices of tomato, fruit cup, assorted milk, mayonnaise and mustard. This lunch exceeded the amount of meat/meat alternative components necessary and did not adequately meet the fruits/vegetables component. The nutrient analysis showed that the February 4th lunch was high in sodium and exceeded the requirements for fat and saturated fat. Review of the Ballou production records also showed incorrect USDA recipe numbers. For

example, the February 3rd lunch production record lists the menu food item cheeseburger as USDA recipe number D-35 which is actually the recipe for spaghetti and meatballs. Along with this type of discrepancy, the portion sizes of some of the menu food items were not accurately listed as either weight (ounce or gram) or as measurement (cup, tablespoon or teaspoon) and there was no breakdown of the various types of milk, cereals or juice served.

Problems Encountered

The review team encountered problems with the production records as initially provided by DCPS which made it difficult to conduct the SMI review more expeditiously. For example:

1) The recipe numbers were incorrect or not provided.

2) The standardized DCPS recipes were not provided.

3) The manufacturers' labels for most of the prepackaged food items were not provided.

4) There was no breakdown of the various types of milk, cereal and juice served.

The review team had to separately request the above information to conduct the nutrient analysis and determine whether the requirements were being met.

NUTRIENT ANALYSIS

River Terrace Elementary School - Breakfast Analysis (See Appendix C)

February 3 - 10, 2003			
Nutrient	**Nutrient Target for Grades (K-6)**	**Weekly Nutrient Average**	**Comments**
Calories (Kcal)	498	495	The calories are below the target amount by 3 Kcal.
Cholesterol (mg)	*	33	The cholesterol intake is within the acceptable range. The RDA of cholesterol for children and adolescents is <170mg/day and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provides less than ¼ of the RDA.
Sodium (mg)	*	720	The sodium level is above the acceptable range. The RDA of sodium for adults is <2,400mg and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provides more than ¼ of the RDA. This may be due to the high level of processed food items served.
Fiber (g)	*	2.16	The amount of fiber is below the acceptable range. The average recommend fiber intake for children in grades K-6 is 13g daily and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provide less than ¼ of the RDA. This may be due to the limited amount of whole grain and fruit products.
Iron (mg)	2.63	3.38	The amount of iron is 128% of the target amount.
Calcium (mg)	214.29	405.81	The amount of calcium is 189% of the target amount. This may be due to the daily serving of fortified milk.
Vitamin A (RE)	168	245	The amount of vitamin A is 146% of the target amount. This may be due to the daily serving of fortified milk.
Vitamin C (mg)	11.43	30.72	The amount of vitamin C is 269% of the target amount. This may be due to the fruit juice served.
Total Fat (g)	<30.0%	12.51	The amount of fat is within the acceptable range and is below 30% of the total calories at 22.73%.
Protein (g)	7.34	15.85	The amount of protein is 216% of the target amount. This may be due to high level of meat/meat alternatives served.
Carbohydrate (g)	*	80.08	The amount of carbohydrate is 65% of the weekly average calories. The recommended carbohydrate intake for adults is 50%-60% of total calories. Because of the limited amount of fiber in the breakfast meals, the sources of the carbohydrates may be juices and refined grain products.
Saturated Fat (g)	<10.0%	5.17	The amount of saturated fat is within the acceptable range and is below 10% of the total calories at 9.40%.

* USDA did not establish quantified standards for these nutrients.

River Terrace Elementary School - Lunch Analysis (See Appendix F)

February 3 - 10, 2003			
Nutrient	**Nutrient Target for Grades (K-6)**	**Weekly Nutrient Average**	**Comments**
Calories (Kcal)	664	662	The calories are below the target amount by 2 Kcal.
Cholesterol (mg)	*	53	The cholesterol intake is within the acceptable range. The RDA of cholesterol for children and adolescents is <170mg/day and the weekly average lunch nutrients provides less than ⅓ of the RDA.
Sodium (mg)	*	1071	The sodium level is above the acceptable range. The RDA of sodium for adults is <2,400mg and the weekly average lunch nutrients provides nearly ½ of the RDA. This may be due to the high level of processed food items served.
Fiber (g)	*	8.81	The amount of fiber is within the acceptable range. The average recommended fiber intake for children in grades K-6 is 13g daily and the weekly average lunch nutrients provide more than ⅔ of the RDA. This may be due to the increased servings of vegetables and fresh fruits.
Iron (mg)	3.47	5.81	The amount of iron is 167% of the target amount.
Calcium (mg)	286	539.21	The amount of calcium is 189% of the target amount. This may be due to the daily serving of fortified milk.
Vitamin A (RE)	224	430	The amount of vitamin A is 192% of the target range. This may be due to the daily serving of fortified milk.
Vitamin C (mg)	15.24	44.76	The amount of vitamin C is 294% of the target amount.
Total Fat (g)	<30.0%	18.03	The amount of fat is within the acceptable range and is below 30% of the total calories at 24.52%.
Protein (g)	9.77	29.93	The amount of protein is 306% of the target amount. This may be due to high level of meat/meat alternatives served.
Carbohydrate (g)	*	98.34	The amount of carbohydrate is 59% of the weekly average calories. The recommended carbohydrate intake for adults is 50%-60% of total calories. From our observations, fruits, vegetables and refined grain products may be the sources of the carbohydrates.
Saturated Fat (g)	<10.0%	7.51	The amount of saturated fat is above the acceptable range and is greater than 10% of the total calories at 10.22%. This may be due to the high level of processed food items and animal protein products served.

* USDA did not establish quantified standards for these nutrients.

Sousa Junior High School - Breakfast Analysis (See Appendix I)

February 3-10, 2003			
Nutrient	**Nutrient Target for Grades (7-9)**	**Weekly Nutrient Average**	**Comments**
Calories (Kcal)	588	883	The calories are above the target amount by 295 Kcal.
Cholesterol (mg)	*	86	The cholesterol intake is above the acceptable range. The RDA of cholesterol for children and adolescents is <170mg/day and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provides more than ½ of the RDA. This is may be due to the high level of animal protein products served.
Sodium (mg)	*	1601	The sodium level is above the acceptable range. The RDA of sodium for adults is <2,400mg and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provides more than ⅔ of the RDA. This may be due to the high level of processed food items served.
Fiber (g)	*	5.73	The amount of fiber is within the acceptable range. The average recommended fiber intake for children in grades 7-9 is 18g daily and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provide more than ¼ of the RDA. This may be due to the increase in grain products such as cereals and breads served.
Iron (mg)	3.40	9.55	The amount of iron is 281% of the target amount.
Calcium (mg)	300	468.63	The amount of calcium is 156% of the target amount. This is due to the daily serving of fortified milk.
Vitamin A (RE)	225	436	The amount of vitamin A is 194% of the target amount. This is due to the daily serving of fortified milk.
Vitamin C (mg)	12.50	67.45	The amount of vitamin C is 540% of the target amount. This is due to the fruit juice served.
Total Fat (g)	<30.0%	23.35	The amount of fat is within the acceptable range and is below 30% of the total calories at 23.80%.
Protein (g)	11.40	25.79	The amount of protein is 226% of the target amount. This is due to high level of meat/meat alternatives served.
Carbohydrate (g)	*	145.58	The amount of carbohydrate is 66% of the weekly average calories. The recommended carbohydrate intake for adults is 50%-60% of total calories. The increase in carbohydrates may be due the increase intake of grain products such as cereals and breads served.
Saturated Fat (g)	<10.0%	6.87	The amount of saturated fat is within the acceptable range and is below 10% of the total calories at 7.01%.

* USDA did not establish quantified standards for these nutrients.

Sousa Junior High School - Lunch Analysis (See Appendix L)

February 3-10, 2003			
Nutrient	**Nutrient Target for Grades (7-9)**	**Weekly Nutrient Average**	**Comments**
Calories (Kcal)	783	818	The calories are above the target amount by 35 Kcal.
Cholesterol (mg)	*	60	The cholesterol intake is within the acceptable range. The RDA of cholesterol for children and adolescents is <170mg/day and the weekly average lunch nutrients provides less than ⅓ of the RDA.
Sodium (mg)	*	1260	The sodium level is above the acceptable range. The RDA of sodium for adults is <2,400mg and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provides more than ½ of the RDA. This may be due to the high level of processed food items served.
Fiber (g)	*	8.58	The amount of fiber is within the acceptable range. The average recommended fiber intake for children in grades 7-9 is 18g daily and the weekly average lunch nutrients provide more than ⅓ of the RDA. This may be due to serving vegetables and grains such as rice and beans on Feb. 4th.
Iron (mg)	4.50	5.05	The amount of iron is 112% of the target amount.
Calcium (mg)	400	527.3	The amount of calcium is 132% of the target amount. This is due to the daily serving of fortified milk.
Vitamin A (RE)	300	462	The amount of vitamin A is 154% of the target amount. This is due to the daily serving of fortified milk.
Vitamin C (mg)	16.70	28.45	The amount of vitamin C is 170% of the target amount.
Total Fat (g)	<30.0%	31.37	The amount of fat is above the acceptable range and is greater than 30% of the total calories at 34.50%. This may be due to the increase in high fat foods such as french fries, mashed potatoes, hot dogs, half smokes, cheeseburgers and pizzas.
Protein (g)	15.20	33.42	The amount of protein is 220% of the target amount. This is due to high level of meat/meat alternatives served.
Carbohydrate (g)	*	105.08	The amount of carbohydrate is 51% of the weekly average calories. The recommended carbohydrate intake for adults is 50%-60% of total calories.
Saturated Fat (g)	<10.0%	9.61	The amount of saturated fat above the acceptable range and is greater than 10% of the total calories at 10.57%. This may be due to the increase in high fat foods such as french fries, mashed potatoes, hot dogs, half smokes, cheeseburgers and pizzas.

* USDA did not establish quantified standards for these nutrients.

Ballou Senior High School - Breakfast Analysis (See Appendix O)

February 3-10, 2003			
Nutrient	**Nutrient Target for Grades (10-12)**	**Weekly Nutrient Average**	**Comments**
Calories (Kcal)	650	509	The calories are below the target range by 141 Kcal. This may be due to the limited menu food items served.
Cholesterol (mg)	*	67	The cholesterol intake is above the acceptable range. The RDA of cholesterol for children and adolescents is <170mg/day and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provides more than ⅓ of the RDA. This is may be due to the high level of animal protein products served.
Sodium (mg)	*	620	The sodium level is within the acceptable range. The RDA of sodium for adults is <2,400mg and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provides approximately ¼ of the RDA. The processed food items were still served but the decrease in sodium level may be due to the decrease in menu food items served.
Fiber (g)	*	3.05	The amount of fiber is below the acceptable range. The average recommended fiber intake for children in grades 10-12 is 21g daily and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provide less than ¼ of the RDA. This may be due to the limited menu food items served.
Iron (mg)	3.40	3.87	The amount of iron is 114% of the target amount.
Calcium (mg)	300	389.07	The amount of calcium is 130% of the target amount. This is due to the daily serving of fortified milk.
Vitamin A (RE)	225	316	The amount of vitamin A is 141% of the target amount.
Vitamin C (mg)	15.00	51.40	The amount of vitamin C is 343% of the target amount. This is due to the fruit juice served.
Total Fat (g)	<30.0%	12.31	The amount of fat is within the acceptable range and is below 30% of the total calories at 21.76%.
Protein (g)	13.00	17.34	The amount of protein is 133% of the target amount.
Carbohydrate (g)	*	84.46	The amount of carbohydrate is 66% of the weekly average calories. The recommended carbohydrate intake for adults is 50%-60% of total calories.
Saturated Fat (g)	<10.0%	5.12	The amount of saturated fat is within the acceptable range and is below 10% of the total calories at 9.05%.

* USDA did not establish quantified standards for these nutrients.

Ballou Senior High School - Lunch Analysis (See Appendix R)

February 3-10, 2003			
Nutrient	**Nutrient Target for Grades (10-12)**	**Weekly Nutrient Average**	**Comments**
Calories (Kcal)	867	746	The calories are below the target amount by 148 Kcal. This may be due to the limited menu food items served.
Cholesterol (mg)	*	72	The cholesterol intake is above the acceptable range. The RDA of cholesterol for children and adolescents is <170mg/day and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provides more than ⅓ of the RDA. This is may be due to the high level of animal protein products served.
Sodium (mg)	*	1452	The sodium level is above the acceptable range. The RDA of sodium for adults is <2,400mg and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provides more than ½ of the RDA. This may be due to the high level of processed food items served.
Fiber (g)	*	5.45	The amount of fiber is below the acceptable range. The average recommended fiber intake for children in grades 10-12 is 21g daily and the weekly average breakfast nutrients provide less than ⅓ of the RDA. This may be due to the limited menu food items served.
Iron (mg)	4.50	4.22	The amount of iron is 94% of the target amount. This may be due to the limited menu food items served.
Calcium (mg)	400	547.46	The amount of calcium is 137% of the target amount. This may be due to the daily serving of fortified milk.
Vitamin A (RE)	300	471	The amount of vitamin A is 157% of the target amount.
Vitamin C (mg)	20.00	25.31	The amount of vitamin C is 127% of the target amount.
Total Fat (g)	<30.0%	33.23	The amount of fat is above the acceptable range and is greater than 30% of the total calories at 40.09%. This may be due to the increase in high fat foods such as french fries, cheeseburgers and pizzas.
Protein (g)	17.20	31.99	The amount of protein is 186% of the target amount.
Carbohydrate (g)	*	83.62	The amount of carbohydrate is 45% of the weekly average calories. The recommended carbohydrate intake for adults is 50%-60% of total calories.
Saturated Fat (g)	<10.0%	12.19	The amount of saturated fat above the acceptable range and is greater than 10% of the total calories at 14.70%. This may be due to the increase in high fat foods such as french fries, cheeseburgers and pizzas.

* USDA did not establish quantified standards for these nutrients.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW FINDINGS

Upon completion of the SMI review of DCPS, the review team concluded that most of the problems encountered are localized at the individual schools rather than systemic.

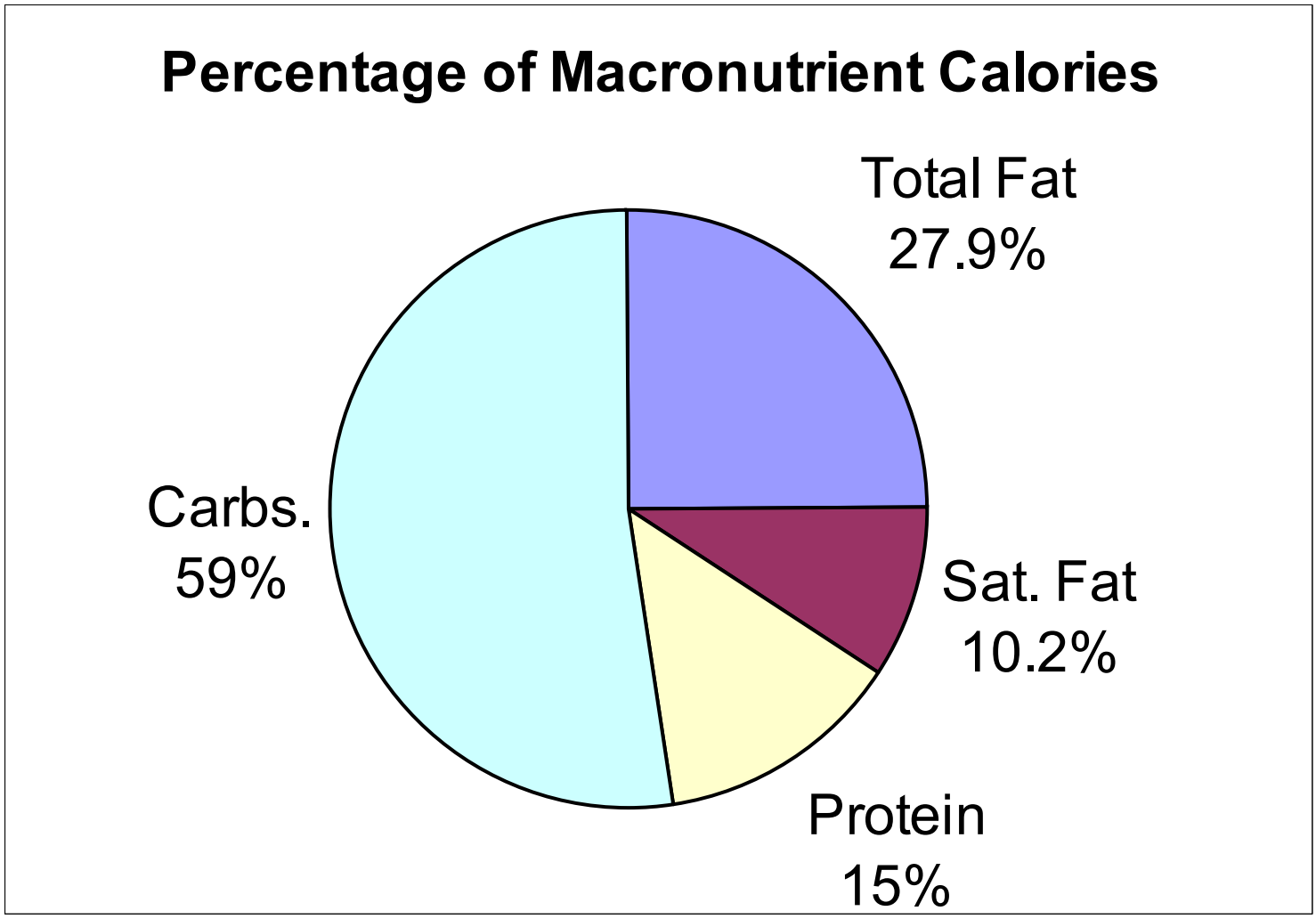
The nutritional analysis showed that calories from the meals provided were within the target range for both breakfast and lunch with the exception of Ballou which had lower weekly average calories. This may be due to the limited menu food items served.

The nutritional analysis also showed that the RDA of the nutrients calcium, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron and protein were being met, if not exceeded, in most instances. This is primarily due to the daily servings of fortified milk and dairy products, servings of 100% fruit juices and increased servings of meat products.

Nutrients such as fats and saturated fats generally fell within an the acceptable range with the exception of the Ballou and Sousa lunch analyses, which showed high levels of both fat and saturated fat. This may be caused by the high fat foods served for lunch such as french fries, hot dogs, half smokes, cheeseburgers and pizzas.

The analysis also revealed levels of nutrients such as cholesterol, sodium and fiber that may be cause for concern. Though USDA did not establish quantified standards for these nutrients, they should not be ignored when assessing the overall health and well being of the children and adolescents in the District of Columbia. The analysis showed cholesterol intake levels that were above the acceptable range for the Sousa breakfast and the Ballou breakfast and lunch. The levels of fiber were low for the River Terrace breakfast and the Ballou breakfast and lunch. We calculated the fiber levels based on the American Dietetic Association's formula for determining recommended fiber intake for children ages 3-18. The nutrient that was consistently reported above the acceptable limit was sodium. The nutrient analysis of all of the schools showed an average sodium intake of 982 mg per meal. In comparing this amount to the RDA of sodium for adults which is <2,400 mg per day, the analysis showed that the sodium levels for the children's one meal was 41% of the adult daily intake.

The chart on the following page depicts the average percentage of calories per meal served of fat, saturated fat, protein and carbohydrates.


Percentage of Macronutrient Calories
Total Fat
27.9%
Carbs.
59%
Sat. Fat
10.2%
Protein
15%

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL MEALS

I. Increase the quantity and variety of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains:

- **a)** Explore the opportunity to add multi-grain breads, rye bread and breads with seeds or nut toppings.
- **b)** Search for creative ways to use pastas, brown rice, barley and bulgur.
- **c)** Increase the variety of cooked whole grain cereals such as oatmeal.
- **d)** Incorporate specialty food bars into the cafeteria such as a salad bar or a whole fruit juice /smoothie bar, to the maximum extent feasible.
- **e)** Don't limit salads to pre-cut salad mix: offer more interesting ingredients, such as broccoli, cauliflower, peas, golden raisins, cubed fresh apples.
- **f)** Use spinach, romaine lettuce and other leafy greens instead of iceberg lettuce in salads,
- **g)** Offer a variety of apples such as Gala, Fuji, Braeburn and Golden Delicious.
- **h)** Increase the variety of fruits by planning tropical menu days where the fruits and vegetables will be representative of different areas of the tropics (pineapple, kiwi, plantains, mangoes etc.)
- **i)** Offer more dried beans and peas such as lentils, garbanzo beans (chickpeas) Great Northern beans and black beans. Beans can even replace a portion of the meat in many entrees and can be offered in the salad.

II. Lower fat, saturated fat and cholesterol:

- **a)** Offer a "light menu option" each day.
- **b)** Serve grilled chicken on a bun instead of deep fried patties.
- **c)** Offer the high fat favorites to students less often.
- **d)** Use lower fat breakfast products such as lower fat breakfast pizza, cinnamon and peanut butter toast, and low fat fruit muffins.
- **e)** Purchase oven-ready french fries instead of fries for deep-fat frying.
- **f)** Purchase leaner meats or mix meats with grains such as bulgur.
- **g)** Steam vegetables and meats instead of sautéing.
- **h)** Substitute non-fat plain yogurt for half of the mayonnaise in salad dressing recipes.
- **i)** Go soy; try adding soy meat substitutes along with meat entrees.

III. Reduce sodium levels:

- **a)** Purchase more fresh and frozen vegetables, where feasible, to substitute for canned.
- **b)** Modify recipes by reducing the amount of salt, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce and other salty condiments.
- **c)** Remove salt from the tables
- **d)** Limit foods with high added sodium (processed foods, luncheon meats, canned soups etc.)
- **e)** Plan more school-prepared items and limit the amount of pre-packaged food items.

f) Use fresh meat in sandwiches and hoagies instead of processed luncheon meats.
g) Balance high sodium foods with other low sodium items.
h) Use herbs and spices to season foods. Use garlic and onion powders or use garlic and onion salt sparingly.

IV. Improve the overall acceptance and appeal of the healthy school meals environment:

a) Merchandise foods to encourage consumption of healthier menu items.
b) Steam vegetables only until tender crisp.
c) Offer meals that include a good balance of colors, shapes, textures, temperatures and flavors.
d) Plan attractive garnishes for the steam table or the individual pre-portioned foods.
e) Conduct student taste tests of new recipes and purchase prepared food items.
f) Enlist the support of teachers and school staff in modeling good eating habits and a positive attitude towards healthy foods.
g) Include nutrition education information on menus sent home to parents.

RECOMMENDED DCPS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Short Term

- Provide more training to the food service managers and area managers to ensure they fully understand how to properly complete food production records. This includes accurately listing the various types and quantities of milk, cereal and juices served daily.

- Improve the quality of the school meals, to the extent that it is financially reasonable, by incorporating some of the previously listed ideas.

- Work with the current food vendor companies to offer low fat and low sodium items in place of the highly processed/ high sodium food items.

- Review old recipes that have been used for years and modify those that may be higher in fat or sodium.

- Develop nutrition education seminars for food service personnel to be held on a consistent basis and cover topics such as healthy food preparation and presentation.

Long Term

- Expand the food procurement horizon by developing partnerships with local and minority farmers through programs such as "Small Farms/School Meals Initiative" organized by USDA to try and bring small farms together with local schools.

- Incorporate nutrition education courses as part of the student's education curriculum. This is an important step to provide students with the proper tool that will help them make healthy food choices throughout their lifetime and reduce their risk of developing diet related diseases caused by an over consumption of fats, cholesterol and sodium.

- Conduct nutrient analysis of menus using one of the USDA approved software such as NUTRIKIDS.

- Apply for mini grants through the USDA Team Nutrition program as well as other sources to help fund some of the SMI/ Healthy School Meals projects.

Corrective Actions:

1) Improve the quality of reporting as it pertains to SMI by correcting production record errors and ensuring production records are accurate and complete.

2) Develop a healthy school meals plan and incorporate the goals of the DCPS improvement plan into the daily practices of the food services division.

Follow-Up:
A representative of the DC State Agency for Special Nutrition and Commodities will perform a follow-up on-site review to ensure that corrective action measures have been taken in the areas of record keeping, proper SMI documentation and the development of a DCPS healthy school meals plan. The DC State Agency will also provide technical assistance to ensure compliance with the School Meals Initiative on an as-needed basis.

Appendices